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This paper attempts to "bridge the gap between the practical orientation of teachers and the theoretical concerns that should underlie practice." Discussed in turn are language, psychology, and pedagogical philosophy. An adequate knowledge of these areas is essential to good classroom practices; every bad practice is evidence of some weakness in understanding these areas. That linguists seem currently more concerned with formulating questions than with proposing answers indicates the likelihood of major new advance, rather than decay and dissolution. Regardless of the state of linguistics, however, there are still certain things students have to learn if they are to speak the second language. Classroom practices should follow some kind of "middle road" in which the natural contexts of language are used to prompt language use, with an awareness of the language structures to be mastered. A teacher cannot rely on any one single, narrow, pedagogical approach, but must respond to the different learning patterns of different students, and their different motives and inclinations. This involves the use of examples, variety, and context-oriented work. The student's gradual development as a person who controls a second language is more important than his apparent mastery of certain patterns. A discussion of the differences between approach, method, and technique concludes the paper. (AMM)

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# TESOL: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES*

Ronald Wardhaugh

This paper is devoted to a discussion of some of the current theoretical problems that we face in teaching English to speakers of other languages in order to relate the theory of teaching English as a second language to some current practices in teaching English as a second language. It attempts to bridge the gap between the practical orientation of teachers and the theoretical concerns that should underlie practice. We can never ignore theory in talking about classroom practices, because good practices must necessarily be built on good theory. Every classroom practice that we have derives from an underlying theory of some kind: every good practice derives from an adequate or good knowledge of language, psychology, and pedagogical philosophy; every bad practice gives evidence of some or other weakness in our understanding of language, or of psychology, or of pedagogy.

In building, or at least attempting to build, a bridge between practice and theory, linguistics, psychology and pedagogy will be discussed in turn. I intend to ask what some of the problems are in each of these three disciplines and show how these problems have certain consequences for classroom practice. In the conclusion, reference will be made to an interesting paper written several years ago by a former president of the TESOL organization, Professor Anthony of the University of Pittsburgh, in which he discussed the differences between approach, method, and technique in second language teaching.[1] This paper will present further arguments for keeping such important distinctions in mind in planning our teaching. Like Anthony, I too will insist on the priority of approach over method, and, in turn, of method over technique.

First of all, what are some of the current problems in the discipline of linguistics as that discipline bears on problems of language teaching and language learning? One of the very first problems is that of coming to an understanding of the nature of language itself. While all linguists will acknowledge that a language is a system of some kind, they will tend to disagree among themselves as to how that system should be characterized and what its total scope should be. Is it, for example, a system which may be expressed in a set of rules, or a set of patterns, or in some other special kinds of grammatical category? Should the system merely describe or characterize a set of sentences which the linguist has happened to observe, possibly a very large set, or should it characterize the set of all possible sentences, a set he has no possible hope of ever observing because it is an infinite set? Even if linguists agree that

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a language is a system which may be expressed in the form of rules, there may well be disagreement about the "reality" of the rules a particular linguist writes. Are the rules he writes in his grammar psychologically real, that is do they somehow also exist in a speaker's and a listener's minds, or are they merely an artifact, a peculiar characteristic, of a particular view of what a linguistic description should be and should encompass? It is certainly true to say that in many cases there is a great deal of confusion about the terms rule and rule of grammar and it is well to be on the alert for potential confusion in the use of these terms.

Linguists will also tend not to be in complete agreement about what the discipline of linguistics is all about. Some will say that linguistics is really a search for language universals, that is for linguistic characteristics which may be found in all languages; others will say that linguistics is a search for methods of analysis; still others will be concerned with making language descriptions, particularly descriptions of exotic languages, on a largely ad hoc basis. The results of such different emphases, of course, are very different kinds of linguistic interests, varying according to the particular linguist one reads or listens to, and very different kinds of understandings about the discipline of linguistics itself. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is a variety of views as to what a grammar is. Is a grammar a theory both about language in general and one language in particular, or is a grammar no more than a description of one language, or is a grammar simply some kind of demonstration that a particular linguistic analysis is workable? Then, even given some measure of agreement about what language is, what linguistics is about, what a grammar is or should be, there may well still be disagreement about whether actual language use is a skill which is largely habitual or an ability which is largely creative. Is language use a skill which can be learned much as one learns to type, or it it an ability, an ability like walking, which is acquired in an entirely different way from typing skill. Everyone learns to walk but not everyone learns to type. And everyone learns to talk too. There do appear to be some critically important differences which must be recognized.

When attention is turned to second language learning and we examine it in the light of what linguists believe a language and grammar to be, we must ask ourselves what must be learned. Is it some kind of system of abstract rules, or some kind of system of habits, or some set of general principles? Or is it a collection of specific items, for example "sentences" or "patterns", which are then manipulated by the second language learner in a way that we do not well understand today? Most linguists will admit that they really do not know much at all about exactly what must be learned in

second language learning.

This overview of the discipline of linguistics suggests that there are all kinds of unanswered questions. In fact, one could say that linguists are currently more concerned with formulating questions than with proposing answers. A healthy attitude towards this state of affairs would be to accept it as a sign of the good health of the discipline, for it indicates the likelihood of major new advances, not of decay and dissolution. It is possible to see some of the results of this kind of concern for formulating interesting questions if one looks at certain very specific linguistic concepts which have been around for many years. For example, the concept of the phoneme has been with us for several decades. This concept has always been a controversial one in linguistics and it is just as controversial today as it was a decade or two ago. However, today the controversies relate to an entirely different set of problems: they now relate to the connection between meaning and sound within an overall language system rather than to such problems as neutralization and overall system, which plagued linguistics for so long. Then again the distinction between a class of words called <u>verbs</u> and another called <u>adjectives</u>, which seems to many of us to be such a simple and obvious distinction, has been called into question by some linguists who believe that verbs and adjectives are really the same kind of word. They claim that adjectives behave very much like verbs and that there are really only basically three types of words: noun-like words, verb-like words, of which adjectives are a sub-group, and a set of relational words, which do not have any propositional or referential content and function therefore quite differently from the other two types. There are many such problems one could discuss: the current concern with the place of meaning in linguistic analysis and linguistic description; the concern with various kinds of abstract syntactic processes; and the concern with the relationship of meaning to syntax, and of meaning and syntax together to phonology. In all of these areas the student of linguistics will see many questions asked, for linguistics is in a state of rapid development, of quick changes, and of great excitement. However, he will find few answers.

It is well to ask at this point how such facts as these influence what we do in our TESOL classrooms? How do current concerns in linguistic theory bear on classroom practices? First of all, we must say that our students still have to learn certain things if they are to speak the second language, regardless of the state that theoretical linguistics finds itself in. For example, students who are learning English must still learn to distinguish <u>beet</u> from <u>bit</u>, <u>bait</u> from <u>bet</u>, and <u>bet</u> from <u>bat</u>. They must learn that in English

those words which we may still want to refer to as adjectives go in front of nouns, and that subjects usually precede predicates. They must still learn that adjectives do not agree in number with nouns. They must still learn that an animal which barks is called a dog, not a Hund, nor a chien, nor a perro. They must still learn what the acceptable sentence patterns of English are, even though these sentence patterns might be called surface structures and be somehow of less interest to theoretically-minded linguists than something called deep structures. Our students must still learn that there are basic building blocks which they must be able to put together to make sense in the new language. They must still learn to speak by being required to do some speaking, for they cannot possibly learn to speak only by thinking about speaking. Therefore, they need drill and they need practice. We cannot hope to inject them with some kind of abstract underlying structure in the hope that they will come out speaking English, several recent claims apparently to the contrary notwithstanding.

Certainly the discipline of linguistics is in a state of flux and the questions being asked are extremely theoretical. However, we cannot teach English as a second language by teaching our students to understand the questions or the theoretical formulations of some of the proposed answers. The students still need to hear dialogues; they still need to have expansion drills in which, given one part of a sentence, they add on another part, add then another part, and finally build up the complete sentence, as it were from the back to the front. Students need substitution drills in which they learn to deal with problems such as anaphora, that is the problems of the substitution of words like it, one and other pronominals, those very difficult words in English. They also need transformational exercises to practice changing one structure into another. It should be emphasized that transformation in this sense is not the transformation beloved of the generative-transformationalist grammarian. The generative-transformationalist uses the term transformation in an entirely different way, so that again it is necessary to be on the alert for confusion.

Now it is quite legitimate to ask, as many linguists do, what exactly a child is learning about language when he mimics dialogues, when he expands sentences, when he does make substitutions, when he changes one sentence into another. We are surely not just teaching the child rote habits which are completely unproductive, as sometimes we are accused. We are sometimes also accused of stifling his creativity, or, less severely, of not recognizing the fact that language use is a creative activity, and that creativity cannot be encouraged or even initiated by the kinds of exercises we employ. However, those who have criticized such practices have not yet

demonstrated how a learner can create a second language without stimuli, and they have not been afraid to use language stimuli in their own teaching which look rather like those so many of us have been using for quite a long time. There is obviously need for good stimuli in language teaching and the kinds of exercises just mentioned (mimicry, expansion, substitution and transformation) seem to be necessary in any kind of systematic second language teaching. It would be entirely foolish for us to throw these overboard in order to sail the completely uncharted sea of creativity!

The last statements should not be interpreted as presenting a case for mindless pattern drill, blind mim-mem methods, and pattern practice ad nauseam. The learner does make a large contribution in language learning and linguists have very rightly stressed that contribution in any kind of language learning. However, it must in all fairness be pointed out that linguists are uncertain what the contribution is, even though they are quite certain that it does exist. A learner always knows certain things about another language before he learns it. For example, he knows that certain kinds of phonological contrasts will occur, that there will be a systematic relationship between sound and meaning, that there will be naming and action words, and he can be absolutely sure that there will be sentences which have definite structures to enable him to make statements, give commands, and ask questions. Of course, children cannot verbalize such understandings, but it is fair to assume that they do have them nevertheless. Our linguistic knowledge would suggest that when he learns a second language he is aware that both meaning and structure are involved in the learning and that there is a critical relationship between the context in which the language is used and the structure of the language which is used in that context. It is quite obvious that no one can learn a language in a vacuum in which the sounds he hears are unconnected to events in the real world, just as it is quite obvious that no one can learn a language without having actual linguistic data presented to him. What linguistic theory would seem to tell us is that we should not forget the context of language learning. Linguistic theory would suggest that we cannot rely exclusively on mimicry, dialogues, mimmem methods and pattern practice drill, ignoring actual language use and the contexts in which language is used. Nor should we go to the opposite extreme of following a method, like the Direct Method, in which linguistic structure is almost totally ignored. Our classroom practices should follow some kind of middle road, some kind of strategy in which we use the natural contexts of language to prompt language use, together with an awareness of the language structures which must be mastered.

When we turn our attention to psychology, we discover many of

the same problems that arose in considering the relevance of linguistic knowledge. Indeed linguistics itself has been called a branch of cognitive psychology, because many of the same questions interest both linguists and psychologists. For example, both linguists and psychologists are interested in the basic question of what the human mind is like, and particularly, what the human mind must be like, given the kind of structures that languages have. Linguists ask what kinds of structures all languages have and what the universal characteristics of language are. Then they tend to speculate on what human minds must be like to be able to use such languages. Or they may speculate that human languages must be as they are as a result of the structure of human minds. While we can observe human languages in action, we cannot directly observe human minds in action, because of a lack of sufficiently sophisticated equipment. Therefore, the study of language turns out to be one very interesting way of making hypotheses about the structure of human minds, and it is largely for this reason that linguistics has been referred to as a branch of cognitive psychology.

However, when we look at psychology in second language teaching and learning, we are really less concerned with speculation about what human minds are like than with the problems of language learning. Note the deliberate emphasis on language <u>learning</u> rather than on language teaching. It has been said, with some justification, that first languages are not taught; they are learned, for they are just too complicated to be taught. How can a parent, or a teacher for that matter, possibly teach something that even very sophisticated linguists hardly even begin to understand? In second language learning and teaching the same problem exists. How can anyone teach a second language when so little is known about any one language, never mind two, and also so little is known about almost every aspect of the learning process? It is necessary to assume that the learner makes a tremendous contribution in the process.

Given that so little is known about the structure of language, it therefore seems difficult to explain how a second language can be learned through some of the simplistic psychological learning models that are available, through, for example, any kind of stimulus-response theory, that is, through a theory in which a language is said to be a simple habit system. Nor can that variation of behavioristic learning theory called reinforcement theory adequately describe or account for how a second language can be learned in its totality. Learning a second language means acquiring a system of rules, but just as very little is known about these rules, even less is known about how such rule systems are acquired. Certainly it is possible to speculate about the

effectiveness of deductive learning and inductive learning. But most of what is said on this topic is speculative and has not been proved out in any rigorous manner. We can also make hypotheses about the influence of motivation on learning, of both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. We can investigate different types of learning as these vary, for example, with the age or the sense preferences of the learner. We can inquire into the various halo effects associated with learning, those halo effects associated with the equipment we use, our materials, the time of day our class is held, the teacher's personality, and particular mixes of students. There are numerous psychological factors in any learning situation, and we really know very little about them.

There are certain data available on the learning process, of course, that do have special interest for us. One of the most interesting collections of such data is the evidence that linguistic interference provides. We know that students from certain linguistic backgrounds have difficulty in learning various aspects of English and that they do make predictable mistakes while learning. The Spanish student fails to distinguish beat and bit and bait and bet, and he does not pronounce school as school but as eschool. The Japanese student comes to study at the Engrish Ranguage Institute. Such mistakes, or deviations from an expected response, can tell us a lot, but not possibly as much as some people have claimed they can tell us. There was a time when contrastive analysis, as it is called, the analysis of the two languages involved in second language learning and a statement of their contrasts, promised to work us miracles. The miracles never came. We should not abandon such analyses but rather we should look at the unexpected responses in more fruitful ways than we have done in the past.

There are many problems then in psychology and we are just beginning to ask answerable and interesting questions about them. From what we do know already we can suggest ways in which classroom practices might be modified and improved. There seems to be one very obvious way in which there could be some rather immediate improvement in the classroom and that is through a change of emphasis from teaching to learning. Too often the classroom is regarded as a place in which the teacher is at the center of interest, a place in which everything flows from the teacher, who knows what is to be taught and exactly how he is going to teach it, and in which the learner is merely the end point of some kind of process. A change of direction seems called for, particularly if language is something that we understand but a little of and if any particular language is a system of which we have merely fragmentary knowledge. If our goal is somehow to help our students to acquire an adequate control of that second language, then the focus must be changed from the teacher to the student. Somehow we have to realize that the

student must do the job for himself, that we can help him, that we can struggle with him in his task of learning the second language, but that since we know so little about that second language, we can provide little more than encouragement and a certain, but not unimportant, amount of help.

The emphasis, therefore, should be less on the teacher and the course or text and more on the student himself. We should attempt to stimulate him to use the language and encourage him to use the innate processes of language acquisition that he has. This means, of course, that in our methods it will be necessary to be eclectic rather than single-minded and monolithic. It means that we cannot rely on any one single narrow pedagogical approach. It means too that we must respond to the different needs of students, the different learning patterns they exhibit, and the different inclinations and motives that they have in learning. Obviously, in such a setting the teacher's role is less one of providing something absolutely sure, certain and definitive, for such certainty does not exist, and more one of trying to create an atmosphere in which learning is encouraged, in which the teacher's enthusiasm for learning, desire for his students' success, and overall commitment to his task somehow rub off on his students. Consequently, I see a need for lots of examples, lots of variety, and lots of context-oriented work.

All of this may seem rather paradoxical, particularly if some of the preceding statements have been interpreted as meaning that we know nothing about language. We certainly do know many things about language, but not a few of these are superficial. For example, many of the phonological contrasts that we know about exist as phonetic contrasts, that is, as actual contrasts in the stream of sound that comes out of speakers' mouths, but not necessarily as contrasts at a more abstract level of language function. Many of the grammatical contrasts may be only surface contrasts existing in the sentences which are produced and may not be as significant as certain deep contrasts which interest linguists. These surface contrasts are still important in language use and fortunately we do know something about them. We must try to make sure that our students systematically acquire these same contrasts and some systematic approach to this task is possible. However, we should be more concerned with the student's gradual development as a person who controls a second language than with his apparent mastery of this pattern or that one. We should attempt continually to find out what the student is doing with the language we are trying to teach him. We should find out what the student is doing, not what the teacher is doing. We should find out what the student can do, because, after all, he is the one who is at the center of our task. Our task is to help him to learn.

It is at this point that interference phenomena are so important. When a student does say something incorrectly, does not control a

certain contrast, produces an ungrammatical sentence, does not know the right word, we should, in Newmark and Reibel's terms, take this as evidence of his ignorance and incomplete learning.[2] Linguistic interference is therefore linguistic ignorance. We should assume that the student is trying to use the second language and, because he does not know enough, he is failing. The problem so far as pedagogy is concerned is that, having recognized this as ignorance, how do we deal with it? Do we treat it through more drill or through explanation? The answer again is not a particularly simple one, because different people learn in different ways and there are also variables like age and motivation. It is quite possible that drill activities will work better with younger students, but in similar circumstances older students may prefer explanation. However, it is doubtful that one can explain the differences between the vowels in beat and bit: the tenseness of one vowel versus the laxness of the other; the off-glide of one versus the lack of glide of the other; and the height of one versus that of the other. The student must learn to feel the difference in the vowels and it is hard, if not impossible, to explain a feeling of this kind. A grammatical point, however, may be explained, but explanation will not guarantee learning. Many of us know foreign students who know a lot about English but whose English is atrocious. Many of us know foreign students who speak beautiful English but do not know anything about English. In language teaching we must be prepared to mix drill and explanation because we can never be sure which technique works with which student.

Pedagogy has been kept to the last in this discussion because it is true to say that even less is known about pedagogy than is known about linguistics and psychology. Some people would even say that there is nothing to know, but I am not one of them. There is also the classic question: "Is teaching an art or is it a science?" And also the question: "Can we examine the teaching process in any scientific manner?" This paper does not propose to try to answer either question, except by saying that there is evidence that teaching is an art but that it can also be studied scientifically. Indirectly, comments have been made on teaching in the discussions of language and psychology. In second language teaching much of what is discussed under teaching actually turns out to be discussion of linguistics or of psychology. For example, it has long been fashionable to import into teaching certain techniques which linguists use in analyzing languages or in making language descriptions. Consider, if you will, the use of minimal pairs such as beat-bit, bait-bet, bet-bat in language teaching. Such use seems to be the importing of a linguistic technique into the classroom. The same use may be seen of ideas from psychology: one way of explaining certain psychological phenomena is to set up S-R bonds. Consequently the teacher attempts to import into the classroom a technique in which students are taught to associate certain stimuli with certain responses i

rather mechanical way. This again seems to be a direct extension into the classroom of a technique from another discipline.

To many of us though, pedagogy involves such matters as the equipment we use rather than the content we teach, so that we become fascinated by the "hardware" of education, things like audio-visual aids, language laboratories, overhead projectors, tape recorders, reading kits, and so on. Many of the pedagogical issues we become concerned about turn out to be about such matters as whether or not we should install a language laboratory, or buy an overhead projector, or requisition one particular set of audio-visual aids. It is just such hardware that we show visitors to our school, that we insist on being provided with when we move into a new building, and that we fight the principal, curriculum supervisor, and school board for. And, rather tragically, it is just such hardware we nearly always end up by completely underusing when we do acquire it. We install a beautiful language laboratory and then find we do not have suitable tapes to play at the master console. We equip our new school with a closed-circuit television system and then find that we either cannot maintain it or do not know how to use it. We buy some elaborate equipment to use with programed materials and then we find there are no programed materials at all, or that the programed materials which are available are completely inadequate. We should not get too caught up with bigger and better hardware at the expense of the "software" of education, the actual content of teaching. There is some reason to believe that the best hardware is chalk, a blackboard, and books, and the most valuable teaching aid in the classroom is a well-prepared teacher. We cannot solve our problems in the classroom by importing more and more equipment into it, nor is the language laboratory the answer to all our needs in second language teaching.

In pedagogy, if we escape being hung up on hardware, we generally get hung up with techniques. For example, we may always insist that sounds and structures must be taught in contrast to each other. We may always insist on contrasting l's with r's, e's with i's and one grammatical structure with another. Or we may insist that we must have a particular kind of textbook for a particular kind of student; for example, specially oriented texts for various ethnic groups. Or we may insist that every new item must be repeated n times, the particular value of n itself varying from three to five or more, but always some magical prime number! Or we may insist that whenever we present a new point the presentation has to follow a certain order: preparation, presentation, consolidation, evaluation, review, and so on. Or we may have notions about simple and complex sounds and structures, notions which are often intuitively-based but present nevertheless. Or we may insist on programing a certain grammatical sequence in a certain series of steps, again

largely on an intuitive basis. Or we may believe in the effects of spiraling or cycling of our materials rather than in straight line programing.

Publishers cater to these preferences and advertise their offerings as much for the particular techniques they exemplify as for any intrinsic content. They sell us English through pictures, or English through Basic English, or English through pattern drill, or English through generative-transformational grammar, or English through portable transistorized transmitters that can be plugged gently into the ear so that the learner can acquire English quite painlessly as he goes about his daily living and even daily sleeping. Teachers tend to accept such things as these, for they do appear to make our jobs easier. Having been a teacher and having been faced with the relentless succession of classes throughout the school day, I can understand why. We think our jobs will be easier if we have just the right texts, or if there is a language laboratory, or if we control a little teaching formula that will do the trick time and time again. Given the kinds of pressures that we work under in our classrooms, it is not surprising that it should be like this, nor am I saying that we should abandon techniques which succeed for us. However, we should ask ourselves why the techniques which succeed do succeed. The answer is likely to be that they work because they really involve our students in worthwhile activity and have a good theoretical justification.

It is impossible to teach language to children, especially, in a sterile, inactive environment. Language is a vehicle for dealing with reality. All linguistic activity must be associated with meaningful activity so any techniques designed to encourage meaningful activity are obviously important in language learning. Consequently, movement, involvement, and situation, and the concomitants of these: laughter, games, and stories, are important in teaching. Our teaching techniques should be focused on trying to encourage as much of this as possible. Good pedagogy then will be less concerned with gimmickry, the pat solution, the utterly predictable lesson plan, and the rather dull teacher-centered activities of classrooms than with involving students and the teacher in some kind of joint meaningful activity in which the focus is on language learning rather than on language teaching. But we should not forget the teacher. We should remember that he is extremely important, if only for the fact that he teaches not only the course that is prescribed, but also what <u>he himself is</u>, and what he is is usually learned much better by the students than any content he ever tries to get across!

It would be useful to sum up this discussion of linguistics, psychology and pedagogy, the three aspects of second language teaching

that we have to take into consideration, by referring to an article that Professor Anthony wrote several years ago, an article in which Anthony discussed the differences between what he called approach, method, and technique.

By approach Anthony referred to the assumptions that underlie our language teaching, that is, the assumptions we have about language and about psychology. He rightly said that such assumptions are generally matters of belief and that they are the axioms from which we derive the theorems, or the methods, and then the derivative techniques that we use. As classroom teachers we should concern ourselves with the underlying axioms of our profession, because everything that we do in our classrooms derives from the assumptions that we make. It does not matter whether or not we can articulate these assumptions; they are still there, articulated or not.

To Anthony method meant the plans for curriculum and teaching which derive from approaches, the plans by which we ultimately present the data. They are plans for the curriculum of a particular kindergarten room in which there are Mexican-American children, or of a particular ghetto school, or of a classroom for a small number of foreign students on a Midwest college campus, or of a special class for non-English speaking students in a suburban school system. Method then is the particular kind of strategy that derives from an approach; it is the overall plan that we have in mind for teaching the language in a particular set of circumstances.

Technique, for Anthony, meant exactly how to do what you decide to do, the specific kinds of practices and techniques that one chooses to employ in a specific classroom. It is quite apparent to me that this is just where much of the interest of classroom teachers lies. We are all interested in becoming better classroom teachers. We all like to find something good and immediately useful in book displays at conventions. We all like to go away from professional meetings with at least one new practical idea that will work. But we would be doing a disservice to ourselves if all we do is hunt for gimmickry and new wrinkles, say a tape recorder with some new kind of switch, or a book which has appeared in a new cover, possibly even in a new edition, but really only the same old wine again. We should try instead, on occasion, to stand back from such concerns in order to achieve a perspective on our task and to evaluate our methods and our general approach. Periodically it is good to rephrase the basic questions that must be asked in a growing and vital discipline like teaching English to speakers of other languages.

Classroom teachers must be prepared to find out as much as they can about what the issues and questions are in linguistics and

psychology, in order to gain some idea of where the answers might lie. In the years ahead it will be more vital to understand what the basic questions are in the discipline than it will be to understand what a certain switch does on the latest tape recorder, or how to use a particular set of flash cards, or what a very specific teaching technique will do in a rather limited set of circumstances. A teacher cannot get through a lifetime of teaching by throwing a succession of switches, or by using a collection of charts, or by inventing a new teaching wrinkle every day. Inevitably the result will be boredom or learning of the wrong things. However, he can take inspiration from a new idea about language teaching, from new sources of information, from new insights into the language learning process, and from new ideas about what a total teaching strategy could be like. A good teacher probably should know how to use a tape recorder, an overhead projector, and some of the other media effectively, but a good teacher is not just a technician. A good teacher is someone who continually examines what he does, continually strives to arrive at new understandings of his discipline, and continually tries to steer a course between doubt and dogma. Good teaching practice is based on good theoretical understanding. <u>There is indeed nothing so practical as a good theory</u>. Teachers should focus from time to time not on techniques, not on methods, but on approach, that is, on theory, and should try in those moments to capture some of the excitement of the many challenges that confront us in teaching English to speakers of other languages.

## FOOTNOTES

* This paper was presented at the TESOL Convention, March 1969. Mr. Wardhaugh, Director of the English Language Institute, The University of Michigan, is the author of Reading: A Linguistic Perspective, (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969).

1 Edward M. Anthony, "Approach, Method, and Technique," English Language Teaching, 17 (1963), 63-7.

2 Leonard Newmark and David A. Reibel, "Necessity and Sufficiency in Language Learning," IRAL, 6 (1968), 145-161.